

Message Text

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S E C R E T SEOUL 4212

NODIS/CHEROKEE

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR SHUM KS US

SUBJ: POSSIBLE PROGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE.

REF: SEOUL 3365

SUMMARY: WE HAVE INDICATIONS FROM SEVERAL SOURCES THAT PRESIDENT PARK IS ACTIVELY SEEKING SOLUTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM AND IS PREPARED IN PRINCIPLE TO MAKE AN ACCOMMODATION TO VIEWS OF PRESIDENT CARTER ON THIS ISSUE. SCENARIO HOW UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION IS PARTIAL RELEASE OF MYONGDONG PRISONERS BY AUGUST 15 WITH REMAINDER RELEASED LATER IN FALL. ALSO UNDER CONSIDERATION IS INFORMING USG IN ADVANCE OF PLANS. HOWEVER PRESIDENT PARK SEEKS COMPLETE SEPARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY ISSUES DURING FORTHCOMING BROWN/HABIB CONSULTATIONS WHOSE OUTCOME COULD AFFECT SOLUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM. INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN SHOULD BE HELD CLOSELY ON NEED-TO-KNOW BASIS. END SUMMARY.

1. FORMER AMBASSADOR TO US HAHM PYONG-CHUN, WHOSE ASSISTANCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE I HAD SOUGHT, CALLED ME URGENTLY LATE MAY 19. HE PROVIDED ME WITH GIST OF SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE HE HAS HAD WITH BLUE HOUSE SECRETARY KIM CHONG-YOM.

2. IN INITIAL CONVERSATION WITH KIN, HAHM URGED VALUE OF QUIET

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DIALOGUE BETWEEN TWO GOVERNMENTS DESIGNED TO WORK OUT MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE ACCOMMODATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. ACCOMMODATION WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT BOTH NEED FOR ROKG TO MEET PRESIDENT CARTER'S PROBLEMS AND TO GATHER MAXIMUM POSITIVE BENEFIT IN US FROM CONCESSIONS IN THIS AREA AND DESIRE OF PRESIDENT PARK TO TAKE FULL CREDIT FOR CONCESSIONS SO THAT THEY DO NOT APPEAR RESULT OF US PRESSURES AND THEREBY ENCOURAGE INCREASED OPPOSI-

TION ACTIVITY. AFTER AN HOUR AND A HALF CONVERSATION KIM WAS CONVINCED OF VALUE OF DIALOGUE AND AGREED TO APPROACH PRESIDENT PARK. KIM MADE CLEAR TO HAHM THAT PRESIDENT PARK IN PRINCIPLE AGREES TO ACCOMMODATION WITH POSITION OF PRESIDENT CARTER ON HUMAN RIGHTS, ON BASIS OF TRYING TO BE HELPFUL TO PRESIDENT CARTER.

3. ACCORDING HAHM, KIM THEN TALKED TO PRESIDENT PARK WHO CONFIRMED HIS AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO AN ACCOMMODATION, BUT WISHED TO BE LEFT FREE TO WORK OUT TIMING AND MODALITIES. FOR THE PRESENT PARK TURNED DOWN PROPOSAL FOR DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH USG SINCE HE FEARS WORD OF THIS DIALOGUE WOULD IN AND OF ITSELF ENCOURAGE FURTHER CONSIDERATION TO THIS PROPOSAL.

4. KIM THEN REPORTED TO HAHM PRESIDENT PARK'S REACTION. HE ALSO INFORMED HAHM THAT BLUE HOUSE IS NOW THINKING IN TERMS OF A PARTIAL RELEASE OF SOME OF THE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS PRIOR TO AUG. 15, WITH THE REST RELEASED IN THE FALL. FURTHER KIM INFORMED HAHM THAT BLUE HOUSE IS CONSIDERING INFORMING ME IN ADVANCE OFFICIALLY OF THESE PLANS PRIOR TO ARRIVAL OF BROWN/HABIB GROUP. ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE TO ACT UNILATERALLY INFORMING US JUST BEFORE RELEASE TO THE PRESS. HAHM SAID THAT HE TOLD KIM THAT TIMING OF RELEASE AND MODALITY WERE TOO LATE TO GAIN MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE IN US. HE URGED EARLIER RELEASE AND STEPS TO INFORM US IN ADVANCE OF THESE PLANS, PERMITTING DIALOGUE BETWEEN US.

5. I ASKED HAHM TO PASS SEVERAL MESSAGES BACK TO KIM BEFORE HAHM DEPARTS MAY 21 TO REPRESENT KOREA AT LAW OF SEA CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK. FIRST, I REMINDED HAHM OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S COMMENT
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TO FOREIGN MINISTER THAT HE WISHED PRESIDENT PARK TO TAKE CREDIT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS CONCESSIONS. SECOND, I FULLY SUPPORTED NEED FOR EARLIER AND HOPEFULLY FULL RELEASE OF MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS. FINALLY I TOLD HIM TO ASSURE KIM THAT IF ROKG WISHED TO ENTER INTO DIALOGUE WITH US, I COULD GUARANTEE SECRECY SO THAT PRESIDENT NEED HAVE NO FEARS OF OPPOSITION BEING INFORMED.

6. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION EVENING MAY 18, FOREIGN MINISTER ALSO TOLD ME THAT PRESIDENT PARK IS AGREEABLE IN PRINCIPLE TO ACCOMMODATION TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S VIEWS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND HE WISHED TO DISCUSS DETAILS FURTHER WITH ME TO ACCOMPLISH THIS OBJECTIVE. WE AGREED TO MEET PRIVATELY EARLY NEXT WEEK BEFORE COMMENCEMENT OF CONSULTATIONS ON TROOP WITHDRAWAL.

7. FINALLY, YESTERDAY AFTERNOON (MAY 19) KCIA DIRECTOR KIM JAE-KYU SOUGHT PRIVATE MEETING WITH GENERAL VESSEY. AT THIS MEETING, WHICH GENERAL VESSEY REPORTING ON CLOSE HOLD BASIS TO GENERAL BROWN, DIRECTOR KIM ALSO AFFIRMED THAT PRESIDENT PARK IS WORRIED ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION AND WANTS TO SOLVE THE

PROBLEMS BETWEEN US. HE URGED, IN THIS CONTEXT, THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION NOT BE MIXED UP WITH THE TROOP WITHDRAWAL CONSULTATIONS, STATING THAT IF OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS CAN WORK OUT SOLUTION ON TROOP WITHDRAWAL QUESTION, OTHER PROBLEMS COULD BE MOVED TOWARD SOLUTION, BUT NOT IF TWO ISSUES TIED TOGETHER. HE ADDED THAT HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE NEEDS TIME TO SOLVE, "ONLY MONTHS" HE HOPED.

8. COMMENT: IT IS PRUDENT TO REMAIN CAUTIOUS ON PROSPECTS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS CONCESSIONS BY PRESIDENT PARK GIVEN PAST VOLATILITY OF HIS REACTION TO ISSUES IN THIS AREA. NEVERTHELESS FOR THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE INDICATIONS FROM SOURCES CLOSE ENOUGH TO PRESIDENT PARK TO BE CONSIDERED RELIABLE THAT HE IS AT LEAST SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING RELEASE OF MYONGDONG PRISONERS, IF HE HAS NOT ALREADY AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO DO SO, AND EQUALLY IMPORTANT IS FULLY AWARE OF SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS ISSUE TO HIS RELATIONS WITH US. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE REMAINS A RELUCTANCE ON PARK'S SECRET

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PART TO TAKE US FULLY INTO HIS CONFIDENCE TO POINT OF ENGAGING IN A SERIOUS DIALOGUE ON MODALITIES OF AN ACCOMMODATION. HE CLEARLY WISHES TO PRESERVE HIS PEROGATIVES IN THIS AREA AND MAKE CLEAR THAT ANY ACTION STEMS FROM HIS DECISION RATHER THAN US PRESSURES. DIRECTOR KIM'S FURTHER WARNING TO VESSEY ON NOT LINDING TROOP CONSULTATIONS TO HUMAN RIGHTS REFLECTS THIS CONCERN ABOUT PARK'S REACTION TO DIRECT US PRESSURES. IT IS MY FURTHER ESTIMATE THAT THE MEN AROUND PARK, PERSONALLY CONVINCED OF VALUE OF CONCESSIONS, BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE NOW BROUGHT PARK VERY CLOSE TO DECISION ON THIS AREA IN WHAT THEY INDICATE MUST BE A VERY DELICATE OPERATION. THEY ARE APPARENTLY NOW DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT TROOP CONSULTATIONS NEXT WEEK DO NOT UPSET VEGRESS ALREADY MADE WITH PARK AND RESULT IN RETROGRESSIVE REACTION ON PARK'S PART AGAINST SO-CALLED US INTERFERENCE. ALL THIS POINTS TO EXTREME CARE IN HOW WE POSE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE DURING THE CONSULTATIONS, BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, ALTHOUGH PARK AND THOSE AROUND HIM, EVEN MORE SO, RECOGNIZE ISSUE CANNOT BE IGNORED. GIVEN SENSITIVITY OF THIS INFORMATION ON POSSIBILITY OF RELEASE OF MYONGDONG PRISONERS, I CAN ONLY URGE THAT IT BE HANDLED MOST CLOSELY ON NEED-TO-KNOW BASIS.

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